

Report of **The Director of City Development and the Director of Environment and Housing**

Report to **Executive Board**

Date: **17th September 2014**

Subject: **Quality Housing Growth & the Leeds Standard.**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

SUMMARY OF MAIN ISSUES

1. High quality housing growth is central to the wider growth ambitions of the city and vital to the well-being of residents. The delivery of new homes which are designed in a way which drives up standards and contributes to place making within neighbourhoods, both through market led delivery and through the council housing growth programme, underpins this ambition. In order to ensure this lies at the heart of the delivery of new homes, the "Leeds Standard" has been developed. This report provides an update for Executive Board on how the Council seeks to achieve appropriate quality standards in support of the delivery of 70,000 houses by 2028, ensuring quality and quantity are achieved in accordance with the draft Core Strategy. It sets out the importance of excellent quality housing in supporting the economic growth ambitions of the council.
2. The report brings forward recommendations regarding how the Council can give guidance, building on the collaborative work between Lead Members, elected Members, officers, partners and representatives of the major house builders.
3. It also provides an update to the report of the Director of Environment and Housing that was presented to Executive Board 25th June 2014, 'Progress on Delivering the Council House Growth Programme'.

4. This included the introduction of a Leeds Standard to ensure excellent quality in the delivery of new council homes under three themes; Design Quality, Space Standards and Energy Efficiency Standards.
5. The report proposes how the Council can use the Leeds Standard in its role as Council landlord through its delivery and procurement approaches. Through its actions the Council can also seek to influence quality in the private sector. Those aspects of the Standard concerned with design quality will be addressed through better and more consistent application of the Council's Neighbourhoods for Living guidance and to assist this clarifications through an explanatory memorandum are proposed . The report makes clear that the wider application of other aspects of the standards is contingent on further government guidance, which currently envisages a formal development plan process and implementation through the building regulations.
6. The development of the Leeds Standard is intended to highlight the ambition of the local authority to achieve a quality product that is fit for modern day to day living and in the case of the council's own housing growth programme, uses all available technical innovations that reduces the running costs for occupants.
7. In delivering the Council Housing Growth Programme modern design techniques and homes for life principles will be adopted. Through this it is intended that properties can be used flexibly and accommodate a family with young children which can be adapted when required at minimal cost and disruption, to a more mature household that may need a number of physical adaptations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. Executive Board is recommended to:
 - i) ask officers to prepare clarification of the Neighbourhoods for Living guidance for residential design in Leeds, focusing on external design issues such as streets, spaces and architecture, layout and character, in line with the principles outlined in the report to enable the Council as the Local Planning Authority to influence the delivery of high quality housing growth.
 - ii) note the summary/review of existing local policy and guidance under the three themes of the 'Leeds Standard', Design Quality and Liveability, Space Standards and Sustainable Design and Construction.
 - iii) note progress on the delivery of the Council Housing Growth Programme including the development of the Leeds Standard and note the next stages of the programme and proposed procurement approach to support the adoption of the Leeds Standard through the construction of new council housing.
 - iv) ask the Director of City Development to consider the required resources to support this approach to the delivery of quality housing growth, together with the key planning and design issues following the Farrell Review of architecture and the built environment.

- v) approve consultation with developers, providers and others in the housing industry on the clarifications to Neighbourhoods for Living.

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide a way forward for improving residential design throughout Leeds to ensure we achieve quality and quantity in the delivery of new houses in Leeds through the development of linked activities brought together to form the “Leeds Standard”.
- 1.2 The level of new house building proposed in the draft Core Strategy will leave an enduring legacy on the city’s physical environment, and it is important that high standards of design and sustainability are achieved as part of the legacy for future generations, and in accordance with the objectives of the draft Core Strategy.
- 1.3 The report proposes that the Council’s policy guidance for the delivery of new residential areas ‘Neighbourhoods for Living’, is enhanced to provide clearer design guidance for new housing development including key issues of design quality and creative processes with developers from an early stage in the design and planning process.
- 1.4 The report will also update Executive Board on the issues of the Leeds Standard as it is being applied to the Council House Growth Programme by considering its relationship with existing planning policy and guidance for new housing in Leeds.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Council is aiming to deliver significant new housing growth of 70,000 houses by 2028, and there is a need to achieve the highest possible design quality to benefit existing and future residents of Leeds.
- 2.2 A housing market which delivers high quality housing in attractive and well-designed neighbourhoods is central to the City’s economic growth ambitions. The development of the Leeds Standard is intended to set a high standard and encourage all housing providers to share the aspiration towards growth which is sustainable and to the benefit of communities. Good quality housing located in excellent places enhances the perception and reputation of Leeds as a place to live, invest and locate business. It builds on collaboration to date with developers and providers and should be seen not as something added on to the housing growth target but integral to its delivery and that of the overarching objective of economic growth and being the Best City.
- 2.3 The importance of good design is emphasised in the draft Core Strategy and other publications, including ‘Neighbourhoods for Living – a guide for residential design in Leeds’, the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document and the Street Design Guide. Together these provide the context for good design in neighbourhoods whilst Building Regulations provide the framework for sustainability and issues including room sizes.
- 2.4 One of the three best Council outcomes (Best Council Plan 2013-17) is to “*improve the quality of life for our residents*”, and the priority “*Maximising housing growth to*

meet the needs of the city in line with the Core strategy” within the Best Council objective “Promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth” which gives a strong foundation to improving the quality of housing and ‘liveability’ of places delivered under this ambitious programme for the city.

- 2.5 The draft Core Strategy, linked with the site allocations process, emphasises the importance of design quality and enabling appropriate housing growth for Leeds. It states that *“one of the biggest challenges Leeds faces is to provide enough quality and accessible homes to meet the city’s growing population, whilst protecting the quality of the environment and respecting community identity”*.
- 2.6 The Core Strategy continues to explain the housing growth principles which include: *“enhance the distinctiveness of existing neighbourhoods and quality of life of local communities through the design and standard of new homes (see Policies P10 and EN2)”* (page 32). The over-arching National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF para 56) also provides a firm basis for this approach as it states: *“the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people.”*
- 2.7 Recent applications for housing development in Leeds, in particular concerns about character and quality, led to a collaborative workshop which was held in late 2013. The aim of the workshop was to promote a greater understanding of how schemes can be designed to better reflect the positive character and identity of adjoining areas to overcome the commonly perceived problems which arise in submitted applications.
- 2.8 The workshop was attended by members of Plans Panels, representatives of major house builders, designers and officers from the Council involved in housing delivery. There is a need for ongoing proactive engagement with leading house builders on these issues to help speed the delivery of the decision on new housing developments and thereby boost the supply of new housing.
- 2.9 The collaborative work has aimed at understanding key issues faced by stakeholders in the delivery process and achieving some consensus on the way forward to achieve the demanding target for Leeds.
- 2.10 Our ‘Best City’ ambitions refer to the quality of the built environment and quality of life for all our residents which are significant drivers for continuous improvement and positive change.
- 2.11 The National Planning Policy Framework, the recent Farrell Review (of architecture and the built environment), our own emerging Core Strategy and our existing ‘Neighbourhoods for Living’ document all point to achieving the highest possible quality design to improve people’s quality of life in the places they live.
- 2.12 Our current Neighbourhood Planning processes, engaging with local people in neighbourhoods across the city, together with the existing neighbourhood design documents (such as Village & Neighbourhood Design Statements and Conservation Area Appraisals) also indicate the importance of place-making and quality of the local environment to people in their neighbourhoods.

- 2.13 The Housing and Regeneration workshop in May 2014 also provided a strong basis for this more collaborative and forceful direction to improve the design quality of housing and neighbourhoods in Leeds. Participants included representatives from major house builders, Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), Registered Providers, Estate Agents, Home Builders Federation, planning consultants, Civic Trust, Councillors and officers.
- 2.14 There has also been a design workshop in respect of the new build council housing programme, to share and explore issues of quality in terms of internal space standards, energy/environmental standards, and external layout & architectural quality.
- 2.15 Earlier this year Executive Board received reports, in February and April, setting out the Council's approach to the delivery of new housing at scale, on previously developed land in its ownership, the delivery of new affordable housing in partnership with Registered Providers in the city and the delivery of new homes through the Council Housing Growth Programme.
- 2.16 These emphasised the critical importance of new residential development in meeting local housing needs, in providing the investment needed to support neighbourhood regeneration plans and in contributing to the delivery of the Best City ambition in all parts of the city. For this investment to be successful and sustainable, the delivery of quality buildings, environments and places will need to be of central importance to any development proposals. Housing growth, meeting housing need, delivering local regeneration and ensuring quality place-making should not be seen as separate considerations. All of the city's residents should be entitled to expect the same high standards of housing design, specification and local environmental improvement.
- 2.17 The Council Housing Growth Programme Executive Board report, 25th June 2014, provided a further update for Members, and introduced the three themes of the proposed Leeds Standard for this work Design Quality, Space Standards and Energy Efficiency Standards. These themes are now used as a focus for providing an understanding of existing local policy and guidance in this report to Members, and assist in steering a way forward for achieving 'quality housing growth in Leeds'.
- 2.18 The Leeds Standard provides a specification for the Council Housing Growth Programme and will act as a guide and influencing tool for market led housing. It links to issues such as digital infrastructure where a dialogue with providers is ongoing to look at how best to secure reliable broadband particularly in low income areas. Through the Leeds Standard the Council is establishing its commitment to high quality housing growth.
- 2.19 Attached as Appendix 1 is a matrix setting out the existing local planning policy and guidance that has been developed to underpin the themes of the Leeds Standard as it applies to the Council Housing Growth Programme and in the Council's role as Local Planning Authority, to housing growth as a whole

Scrutiny Board consultation

- 2.20 Consultation has taken place with the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board, who invited representation from the Sustainable Economy and Culture and the

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Boards to a working group to consider the Leeds Standard (28th August). The working group were supportive of the approach, providing context and advice on the framing of the standard and helping to shape the approach to dialogue with developers (set out in more detail at 3.1.4). Observations from the working group are at Appendix 4

3.0 MAIN ISSUES

The Leeds Standard

- 3.1** The Leeds Standard is a comprehensive approach to the design of new housing. It comprises the clarification and application of the principles held within the Neighbourhoods for Living document which will be updated and enhanced, in addition to a clear set of standards and specification for the Council's new build programme under each of the three themes set out below – design standards, space standards and energy efficiency.
- 3.1.1** The application of the Leeds Standard (LS) will take two routes, it will be used to influence market delivery through the update and application of the principles held within the "Neighbourhoods for Living" document and an ambitious specification for the Council's new build programme
- 3.1.2** The development and application of the LS directly supports council policies and priorities in respect of being an age friendly and child friendly city. The principles of the Core Strategy require that issues such as access to community infrastructure, including health facilities and retail is taken into account in scheme design (Objectives – Place Making pg 18) . It supports design which encourages physical activity including playing and walking and the use of public transport and cycling. It also encourages the delivery of highly energy efficient homes which are efficient and affordable to heat. This principle together with the design of spacious, flexibly designed houses which can meet the needs of residents at different stages in their lives, are further reinforced in the specification for the Council's own new build housing programme. It is recognised that over time the needs of residents change as a result of age, disability or health issues. To ensure that properties are sustainable and able to meet future demand and the needs of occupants, it is important that properties are designed in such a way that they can be easily and cost effectively adapted.
- 3.1.3** Innovation in design and the use of technology will be key to the drive towards excellent standards in housing delivery and will be central to the delivery of the Council's own new build housing. Where the Council researches new technology it will be able to share learning with the wider development industry in support of the LS approach. There are a number of existing examples of good practice in terms of sustainability including: the Lilac scheme at Bramley which is a co-housing project featuring straw bale construction; Bywater Court at Allerton Bywater which has a range of energy efficient features, cycle storage and the potential for home office working plus a high level of reused or recycled materials; Greenhouse in Beeston which includes a range of community facilities and is a highly sustainable development including a ground source heat pump, wind turbines and solar thermal panels and the Council's new build housing at Pudsey which includes solar smart hotwater.

3.1.4 Central to the Leeds Standard approach is early engagement between developers and the planning service. The added impetus provided by the adoption of the standard and clarification of design expectations in Neighbourhood for Living will help to speed up the delivery of new housing development, the need for early dialogue will be reiterated. This will give developers an opportunity to demonstrate how their scheme meets the council's aspirations (should they be required) and an early indication of where design improvements could be made. This will provide reassurance to Ward Members, Plans Panels and to communities that a collaborative approach to good design has been taken. Where proposals do not meet the expectations and requirements of NfL and other relevant guidance, developers can be advised early enough in the process so that time and resources are not unduly wasted on poor quality schemes. There are a range of examples where early dialogue and good communication have resulted in a collaborative approach and a good design outcome. These include recent developments at Guiseley and the Barnbow site at Crossgates.

3.1.5 The use of NfL as updated in support of the drive towards excellence will provide clarity in respect of the standards expected and will help developers and providers to quickly and more efficiently achieve a positive response to design proposals.

3.2 Design Quality and Liveability – Presently the Council receives a significant number of planning applications for poorly designed residential schemes which require significant and lengthy processes of negotiation. Additionally, too often they fail to reflect positive character and identity of the individual places and communities as outlined in the NfL document which provides a guide to high quality residential design in Leeds.

There are a number of schemes exhibiting good design practice within Leeds (for example aspects of the recent award-winning Churchfields scheme at Boston Spa.;

However, it is considered that some recent applications have failed to meet the policies. The importance of dealing with this concern is supported by the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF para 64) which states that *“permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions”*. Typical shortcomings include the following:

i) Layout

Notable concerns have been around the issue of 'layout' where accommodating vehicles has not been proposed with creative or appropriate solutions. Other concerns include tightly packed detached and semi-detached houses and narrow fronted dwellings with integral garages. This all too often results in a proposed 'streetscene' with a visual dominance of car parking and little space for appropriate landscape. Many schemes also exhibit a lack of detail, which could be provided through the use of bays, porches or chimneys on individual dwellings.

There is a need for better quality streets and a greater use of 20mph zones for safety and 'liveability' of housing areas, as identified in the existing Street Design Guide, issues by LCC in 2009).

Wider issues of sustainability and the issues of mix, other facilities and 'walkability' are also involved aiming to create sensitive active "neighbourhoods for living" for existing and future residents of Leeds.

Dialogue and direction regarding how to achieve our quality expectation has commenced and continues to be needed.

ii) Character, Form & Detail

Other key concerns have been with regard to 'character, form and detailed design' with many proposals taking insufficient reference or inspiration from the positive characteristics of the local context.

Leeds has grown over time, and contains diverse and high quality, characterful places. New development should take account of and respond to this; for example, 3-dimensional form, materials, windows and door opening sizes, window design and detailing all have a part to play.

In some cases front elevations have been presented at Plans Panels lacking cohesive quality, appropriate proportions, a sense of proportion in elevations, roof and porch details, sometimes not appearing as 'fronts' at all and inappropriate materials which together do not respond well to the character of their localities.

A sense of security and natural surveillance of the street are part of this issue too. Plans Panels have been faced with many applications which represent a standardised approach to design of dwellings which do not respond to the character and richness of design in the neighbourhood.

iii) Design Process

Design process issues are at the heart of this too. NfL identified the need for a context/analysis-based design process with distinct stages of: *analysis-concept-scheme-detail*.

Early engagement with the local planning authority and the community is essential so proposals grow from a firm foundation and reflect the best qualities of the environment in which the proposed development will take place. This has been lacking in many recent applications which deliver scheme ideas before finding common ground with the analysis and concept stages.

These stages are referred to in NfL and are needed to enable a project to design/develop well. Recent protocols have been adopted by the Council regarding the consultation work associated with planning applications and this provides a framework for this work.

It has also been appropriate to engage directly on the barriers to achieving quality. Funding and delivery are fundamental considerations in this dialogue, and through the collaborative workshop process over recent months the Council has engaged on these issues with leading house-builders. Again, more clarity here should enable more efficient and effective planning processes. Early

engagement is crucial to success, enabling qualitative and quantitative issues to move forward together.

3.3 Achieving quality design standards.

There are further national publications (in addition to NPPF) that help to underpin the drive for design quality, for example:

- i) The Future Homes Commission's report - Building the Homes and Communities Britain Needs, Oct 2012

This report has followed extensive consultation the outcomes of which have been submitted to the Government for further consideration.

The Commission set out to understand *"how people live today, what they need and expect from their homes and whether the design and delivery of new homes is fit for purpose"*. The findings underlined issues and concerns regarding quality and delivery (very similar to the Council's recent concerns and considerations).

Space standards were of particular concern, and recommendation 5 states that *"the government must ensure its review of local housing standards sets minimum national standards for space, storage, noise, insulation and natural light"*

- ii) Farrell Review of architecture and the built environment (prepared for national government, March 2014)

This review vindicates the Council's ambition for design quality and the role of planning that has emerged strongly in Leeds. The report incorporates a number of recommendations including: no.75 which aims *"...to bring about a revolution in support of proactive planning in this country. For the sustainability of our villages, towns and cities we have to reduce our reliance on reactive planning which is characterised by the current system of development control (or development management as it is now called)"*.

The Review recommends enabling and retaining good design skills and processes within local authorities, and recommends Design, or PLACE, review to ensure quality is achieved consistently. 'PLACE' represents Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Conservation and Engineering as identified in the Farrell Review and are key components of quality place-making.

The Council's Ten Urban Design Principles provide a similarly holistic view of considerations which underpin good place-making in Leeds. The Review's findings continue to emphasise quality of housing and long term interest: *"properties will be treated less as commodities to be traded and more as assets to be cared for and nurtured"*. The Review decries the *"anywhere architecture" of mass housing*, and promotes *"making mass 'ordinary' housing really good"*.

Quality of design and layout are inextricably linked with quality of life issues for residents/communities, and wider sustainability considerations. The Review recognises some positive work done at a collaborative, national level in recent years with the Building for Life 12 principles – *"the government-endorsed industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods, launched as a partnership*

between the Design Council, the Home Builders Federation, and Design for Homes”.

The Review’s findings also provide an insight into the concern regarding the landowners’ role in the ‘market failure’ to deliver quality by the perceived land values at the outset, and adds that *“an incentive-based model would ...entice local landowners to share the cost of place-making improvements and would have positive results for everyone involved, acting as a catalyst for change”.*

Following the collaborative workshop with major house-builders, Councillors, officers, and other partners, it is proposed that further clarification of the NfL guidance is provided. It is proposed that this update includes clarity on creative processes between developers and the Council to collaborate well on each project to move towards delivering ‘quality housing growth in Leeds’.

3.4 Space Standards

The Council’s Core Strategy provides the current background for private and public sector housing provision with policies including H4, together with the Supplementary Planning Guide ‘Neighbourhoods for Living’ referencing access/adaptability principles associated with homes for life, older people, access for people with disability and working from home.

3.5 Sustainable design and construction

The National Planning Policy Framework expects local planning authorities when setting any local requirement for a building’s sustainability to do so in a way consistent with the Government’s zero carbon buildings policy and adopt nationally described standards.

The Government’s response (July 2014) to the consultation on Next Steps to Zero Carbon Homes states that the Government:-

- Intend to set an on –site energy performance requirement at a level equivalent to level 4 energy standards of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Only 10% of new homes are built to this standard
- Will bring forward legislation to enable a framework for ‘allowable solutions’ to support off-site carbon abatement measures;
- Will consult on exempting small house builders from the requirement to achieve zero carbon homes.

3.6 The Housing Standards Review

3.6.1 The Ministerial Statement made on 13th March provides an important government basis for how the issues of Space Standards and Energy Efficiency Standards are proposed to be dealt with at a national level, with a single option for local authorities to consult on a specific higher standard.

3.6.2 The Review and Ministerial Statement outline the opportunity to improve and consistently apply standards for internal house/room sizes, storage areas and environmental targets through the Building Regulations nationally and applied locally.

- 3.6.3 It is considered that *“new homes need to be high quality, accessible and sustainable”*. It is assumed that what this will mean in practice will be generally fixed at a national level in an effort to rationalise the many standards and to *“reduce the regulatory burden on the housing industry”*.
- 3.6.4 The Ministerial Statement and supporting note refers to *“local discretion”*, and enabling *“different levels of performance where these were necessary to meet local circumstances”* where the local authority would *“need to justify its application according to evidenced needs and subject to local plan viability testing”*.
- 3.6.5 The ‘Optional Building Regulations’ will include accessibility, space, domestic security and water efficiency, and the current Code for Sustainable Homes is due to be phased out with some parts being incorporated in the Optional Building Regulations.
- 3.6.6 The draft document is due out in summer/autumn 2014, and implementation expected in early 2015. At present, however, the legal framework/basis for this wider application in detail is currently unclear in the Government’s current Housing Standards Review outcomes. It appears that the Optional Building Regulations will be the maximum standard for space and energy which could be adopted for local planning.
- 3.6.7 Once Government policy is clarified the adoption of local standards will need to go through the development plan process including the provision of supporting evidence and viability testing.

3.7 The development of the Leeds Standard for the Council Housing Growth Programme

- 3.7.1 As a social landlord with a significant new build programme the Council will set a new standard for development in excess of that which might ordinarily be brought forward by the market. In so doing it will seek to show how excellent quality can be achieved and how design lies at the heart of good development.
- 3.7.2 Executive Board have previously approved a programme of investment to deliver a comprehensive programme of new build housing. The resources currently available to deliver the Council Housing Growth Programme stand at £73m. The programme will deliver nearly 1,000 new Council homes, a level not seen since the 1970s.
- 3.7.3 The scale of this work will not only address significant housing need in the city but will also help the Council to make a statement about the future of social housing in the city.
- 3.7.4 Demand for property in the city is likely to increase and the Council can play a role in meeting the increasing demand for good quality rental properties by changing the perception of the product that is being delivered, using innovative designs that reduce the carbon footprint and delivering a cheaper product to maintain, by using the latest innovation and technology.
- 3.7.5 It is the intention to build modern homes using innovative design principles that offer the best in environmental design but also ensures flexibility to allow for family growth.

- 3.7.6 The report will therefore outline a new standard that the Council will deliver in its role as a social landlord taking account of design quality, space standards, energy efficiency and modern technology.
- 3.7.7 Excellence and innovation is central to the council housing growth programme so that the new housing which is delivered meets current and future demand and supports the wellbeing of tenants through good use of space, reduced running costs to tenants through energy efficient design and which stands the test of time.
- 3.7.8 The application of the LS to this growth programme draws on a number of existing Council policies to support and reinforce the standard in addition to additional specification which is set out in Appendix 1. The documentation that will be developed to outline the LS will be used as part of the tender documentation and will be used as part of a methodology to identify costed options within an overall cost envelope.

3.8 Design Quality

- 3.8.1 This aspect of the standard will incorporate good urban design and site layout and will use the existing standards of NfL (expanded as described above). The provisions of NfL will be used to prompt, steer and assess design proposals as they develop and schemes will be assessed against it and other relevant planning guidance.
- 3.8.2 NfL as clarified will provide the framework for steering and assessing layout, character and design process and designs will be assessed to ensure they perform strongly against the NfL criteria. Particular consideration will be given to external space for the provision of car parking as well as external space such as defined gardens and public green open space.
- 3.8.3 In designing the site layout consideration will be given to orientation to make best use of solar energy, individual schemes will be designed with the technology to store energy which can be shared for the benefit of all residents within specific schemes
- 3.8.4 The design layout will also take account of access for services to dwellings to such as refuse collection services. The Council's 'Street Design Guide' and "Building for Tomorrow Today" Supplementary Planning Document provide the policy framework for aspects of design quality. As existing policy, it is critical that these are rigorously enforced with developers as a key part of the Standard.
- 3.8.56 These documents are of particular importance in the Council Housing Growth Programme and considers a number of issues, for example:
- The number of vehicle access points to the site.
 - Encouraging 20mph zones, traffic calming
 - Footpath width should be a minimum of 2m
 - Verge width should be a minimum of 1m

3.9 Space standards

- 3.9.1 Properties will be developed to appropriate sizes which can be flexible and allow for reconfiguration if required. This links to the challenge of meeting the increased demand for smaller units in certain localities which will assist to free up larger family houses.
- 3.9.2 Consideration of the size of properties in localities may require flexibility in respect of demographic changes in as well as the local infrastructure that will also affect the longer term sustainability of communities.
- 3.9.3 This approach will help support the response to the issue of overcrowding and its effect on health, school performance and so on in addition to ensuring properties can be adapted where required to meet individual tenants' needs in a cost efficient way, delivering savings to the adaptations budget over the longer term.
- 3.9.4 The development of the Space Standard within the LS will be informed by the current standards developed by the HCA. The standards (called the Level 1 Benchmark) provide the basis for the approach to the Council Housing Growth Programme and are set out at Appendix 2.
- 3.9.5 The recommendations of BS9266:2013 (Design of accessible and adaptable general needs housing - Code of practice) will be referenced to ensure that general needs housing is sufficiently flexible and convenient to meet the existing and changing requirements of most households by adaptation of the interior fabric rather than the structure to accommodate aids and equipment. This British Standard covers car parking, external access routes to blocks of flats or individual houses, common circulation areas in blocks of flats, circulation areas within dwellings, and the provision of key rooms and facilities.
- 3.9.6 In addition, a range of additional criteria will be considered for schemes and are set out at Appendix 1 the Leeds Standard Matrix.

3.10 Sustainable design and construction

- 3.10.1 The main design principles are in respect of energy efficiency to reduce the carbon footprint and reduce running costs.
- 3.10.2 Appendix 1 sets out the specific specification requirements to achieve excellent energy efficiency standards. The procurement process needs to be adaptive to allow for new innovation and to reflect new technology that is constantly being developed within this area of the design and building of new homes.
- 3.10.3 We will require design solutions that provide energy efficient dwellings to minimise running costs for tenants, address fuel poverty and contribute to broader sustainability agendas. The development of this part of the LS will also extend to issues such as sound insulation. The relevance of standards such as Passivhaus is currently being explored.
- 3.10.4 Each property will either benefit from the provision of solar PV for providing electricity or be designed to allow easy retrofit. In the event that individual properties do not have a south facing orientation we will work with Northern Power Grid to explore electricity storage to ensure that each resident living within a specified scheme will benefit from a shared solar PV provision.

- 3.10.5 All properties should have SMART electricity meters (and gas if present) to enable tenants to understand their energy use, to benefit from lower fuel costs in future, to use SMART products/appliances and to help us to monitor actual energy consumption.
- 3.10.6 The standard would require broadband and satellite/cable TV connectivity to each property. In order to make best use of innovative design solutions the procurement process will be designed to encourage developers to propose solutions that will deliver measurable outcomes to define the thermal qualities of the end product and will reduce the running costs for the occupants.

3.11 Future Maintenance

- 3.11.1 Future maintenance of properties is a key consideration in the development of the Standard. The Standard will therefore look to achieve a balance between the benefits of modern methods of construction and the ambition to have good quality design, with the need to maintain, repair, service and improve the properties and the materials and components used in their construction over their expected lifetime. Durability and a degree of standardisation is a key consideration and developers will be expected to use easily available, high quality materials and components that not only comply with applicable industry standards but also meet current Council specifications for use in existing properties. This will ensure greater reliability and that replacement parts are available for service and repair which will protect against obsolescence and maximise the component life expectancy, thereby reducing future maintenance and replacement costs.

3.12 Update on the delivery of the Council Housing Growth Programme

- 3.12.1 The report to Executive Board in June outlined an approach to bidding for resources to the HCA. The Council has been successful in securing £8.6m grant funding to support a programme of 408 new council homes - 308 new build properties and an empty homes programme which will return 100 properties to use as council houses. This not only allows the Council to stretch its resources to increase the programme but also establishes the Council in a lead role in directly delivering housing growth. The Council Housing Growth Programme is the largest programme of new council housing and the first substantial investment in new properties for approximately 30 years. The HCA's support is an indication of confidence in the Council's ability to deliver and an endorsement of the strategic approach to delivery.
- 3.12.2 The Project Plan attached as Appendix 3 provides the forecast delivery of the programme

3.13 Procurement Approach for the Council Housing Growth Programme

- 3.13.1 In delivering new Council homes to an excellent standard, the approach to procurement is being reviewed. This will recognise the advantages of early and ongoing engagement with contractors to ensure that the programme is quality led and that innovation is encouraged and evaluated including through specialist and market leaders for relevant schemes.

3.13.2 Colleagues in the Council’s Procurement Unit have been working closely with the project team to identify the best procurement routes for sites or packages of sites and the opportunity to tie this in to wider strategic activity such as the Brownfield Land Programme of investment where sites might lend themselves to this approach.

3.13.3 Whilst the procurement process will focus on innovation and will look to deliver a mix of design excellence and value for money, an ongoing review of this process after the delivery of each scheme will be undertaken to ensure that the current methodology is fit for purpose and is flexible to ensure that best practice and new innovation is built into the tender process for all new schemes.

3.14 Comparison of approaches

The table below summarises the approaches to embedding the LS within the Council Housing Growth Programme and its wider application to housing growth more generally. Appendix 1 sets this out in more detail indicating the relevant policies and specification requirements which comprise the Leeds Standard Matrix.

Leeds Standard theme	Council Housing Growth Programme	Wider application
Design Quality and Liveability	Application of NfL used as assessment matrix	Neighbourhood for Living with new ‘inserts’ and a new Foreword to update and clarify this existing adopted guidance.
Space Standards	Adoption of HCA standards for Council House Building plus specific requirements as set out in detail in Appendix 1	Consideration of Council House Building programme standard can only be achieved following viability testing and consultation. <i>When available, consult on the Optional Building Regulations – with a view to adoption</i>
Sustainable design and construction	Adoption of the principles set out in detail in Appendix 1	Consideration of Council House Building programme standard can only be achieved following viability testing and consultation. <i>When available, consult on the Optional Building Regulations – with a view to adoption</i>

4.0 CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 An individual communication and consultation plan will be developed for each scheme as part of the development process. Consultation for each scheme will be undertaken with local ward Members, members of the local community and interested partners.

4.1.2 Consultation has taken place led by the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Board as referred to at paragraph 2.20.

4.1.3 Consultation has taken place via the Housing Advisory Board (9th September) and will take place through a range of Registered Tenant Group meetings

4.1.4 This report is the result of collaborative workshops (outlined in the report) initialled by the Chief Planner and the Deputy Leader of the council / Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services.

4.1.5 Further consultation will take place with developers, providers and other interested groups across the housing industry on proposed clarifications to NfL and in due course issues such as sustainability and bedroom sizes which will be clarified following the Government's Housing Standards Review.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 There are positive equality considerations arising from the proposals contained in this report, and an Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise was carried in August 2014 that identified this. The outcome of the screening exercise was that the proposals will assist the Council in meeting the needs of equality groups by making homes more accessible and secure and thereby benefitting people with disabilities and older people.

4.2.2 The proposals will also assist in improving the quality of people's lives by creating safer communities which could broaden the population mix and therefore increase levels of integration and cohesion between different communities.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The City Priority Plan includes an objective to maximise investment to increase housing choice and affordability.

4.3.2 Investment in housing growth supports one of the objectives of the Best Council Plan to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth by providing new housing.

4.3.3 Investment in housing growth also supports the objective to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth by increasing housing options and also by supporting the construction industry.

4.3.4 The introduction of the LS to the city's housing growth will directly support the Child Friendly Leeds policy and the objectives of the Better Lives Programme managed by Adult Social Care. This will be achieved through the enhancement of NfL and the use of the council's design guidance in addition to the principles of homes for life, sustainable construction and excellent space standards within the Council's own programme. Across the spectrum of all new build it seeks to ensure that the layout of new estates is safe accessible where possible layouts encourage healthy lifestyles and that new council homes are spacious, warm and able to meet the needs of households including through the configuration of space to meet changing needs.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

- 4.4.1 A separate report is being presented to Executive Board which seeks approval for the resources to deliver the Housing Growth Programme.
- 4.4.2 In respect of the Council Housing Growth Programme: bids will be evaluated based on a split between costs and quality with sufficient emphasis being placed on innovative design. The total resources injected into the capital programme and currently available through the HRA to deliver the Council Housing Growth Programme is £72.6m.
- 4.4.3 Whilst costs are a major factor for consideration, this needs to be balanced and considered against any additionality which innovation can deliver
- 4.4.4 The costs for each scheme within the council housing growth programme need to be assessed on an individual scheme by scheme basis so that the outcomes can be delivered within a framework of affordability and developed as part of the overall procurement process for each scheme.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. The Neighbourhoods for Living Guidance document was produced as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and is a material planning consideration when determining relevant planning applications. The proposed changes to this document are intended simply to provide explanatory text to assist in clarifying existing policy guidance contained within the document. It is not intended to alter that guidance in a material way. It is proposed however that views on these proposals are sought through consultation prior to revising the document in order to gauge how effective the explanatory text is in making the document easier to use and understand. It is not intended that the status of the document as SPG will change.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 The Leeds Standard as it relates to commercial delivery takes a collaborative approach with the development industry, clarifying and updating policy and guidance documents so that all contributors to housing growth have a shared understanding of and commitment to good design. The Leeds Standard does not represent a risk to the delivery of new homes the city needs. The approval reflects the policies of the Core strategy which were tested through the recent examination and existing guidance not necessarily equate to extra cost. As the Government's Housing Standards Review completes, greater clarity will be achieved in understanding the required standards and that those of the enhanced NfL document can be adopted following negotiation and proven viability.
- 4.6.2 Further it is intended that those specific standards which the Council is adopting for its own new build programme will establish the LS as one to aspire to.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 This report provides background to the renewed ambition for 'quality' and 'quantity' in housing growth in Leeds. It provides a summary of the current local policy and guidance under the themes of the Leeds Standard as proposed for the Council House building programme in Leeds.

- 5.2 The report recommends that Leeds City Council is more proactive and concerted in its ambition for the highest quality design in residential development in Leeds, clarifying policy guidance and providing a model of the Leeds Standard in our Council House-building work.
- 5.3 This responds to our own 'Best City' ambitions, the Core Strategy, together with existing policy guidance, and the Farrell Review, examining architecture and design in the built environment nationally which includes planning and, specifically, housing quality.
- 5.4 This report also follows a series of workshop events since the latter part of last year engaging with decision-makers, providers, consultants and officers to understand the issues to move forward together to improve quality and quantity of housing in Leeds.
- 5.5 Our target of 70,000 houses by 2028 represents an accelerated provision in relation to the development rate of recent years and the highest level of housing delivery for any local authority in England. It is vital that high standards are achieved.

This update of guidance is specifically targeted at providing clarity for major house-builders work, but also is relevant for other developer types.

- 5.6 The Council House-building programme will provide an opportunity for Leeds City Council to deliver the kind of high quality housing and places required for 2014 and beyond.
- 5.7 Whilst good place making should not necessarily be equated with extra cost, any approach to design and specification should be appropriately and carefully balanced with an appreciation of the viability challenges that may face both the Council and house-builders in some parts of the city, whilst understanding that regeneration and quality standards can also come with benefits of higher value and area improvement.
- 5.8 It is considered appropriate to propose that the emerging Leeds Standard is consulted on more widely with the opportunities to encourage use of its provisions in the work of registered providers and possibly wider to the private sector.
- 5.9 The Government's Housing Standards Review has proposed a rationalisation of existing policy and indicates that space standards and energy standards will be standardised nationally, with local authorities able to adopt the Optional Building Regulations to a higher than 'normal' level following appropriate/statutory viability testing and consultation. The legal framework for delivery is currently unclear as draft guidance is due in summer/autumn 2014, with implementation expected in early 2015).
- 5.10 This report also provides recommendations regarding the impact of stepping up the Council's focus to deliver 'quality housing growth' and the Government-initiated Farrell Review (of architecture and the built environment).

5.11 The Leeds Standard provides a clear statement of intent and expectation and will be reviewed over time in line with technology and good practice.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Executive Board is recommended to:

- i) ask officers to prepare clarification of the Neighbourhoods for Living guidance for residential design in Leeds, focusing on external design issues such as streets, spaces and architecture, layout and character, in line with the principles outlined in the report to enable the Council as the Local Planning Authority to influence the delivery of high quality housing growth.
- ii) note the summary/review of existing local policy and guidance under the three themes of the 'Leeds Standard', Design Quality and Liveability, Space Standards and Sustainable design and construction.
- iii) note progress on the delivery of the Council Housing Growth Programme including the development of the Leeds Standard and note the next stages of the programme and proposed procurement approach to support the adoption of the Leeds Standard through the construction of new council housing.
- iv) ask the Director of City Development to consider the required resources to support this approach to the delivery of quality housing growth, together with the key planning and design issues following the Farrell Review of architecture and the built environment.
- v) approve consultation with developers, providers and others in the housing industry on the clarifications to Neighbourhoods for Living.

7.0 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS¹

7.1 None

8.0 APPENDICES

8.1 The Leeds Standard matrix

8.2 HCA Level 1 Space Standards

8.4 Council Housing Growth Programme Plan

8.5 Observations from the Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Board Working Group

8.6 Equality Impact Screening Form

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.